UNITED
NATIONS

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General Assembly Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/46/869
S/23515
4 February 1992
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Forty-sixth session
Agenda item 35
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-seventh year

Letter dated 4 February 1992 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In his letter of 27 January 1992 (S/23479) replying to our letters of 17 January 1992 (S/23435) and 21 January 1992 (S/23453), the Permanent Representative of Israel makes a number of false allegations to justify the daily acts of aggression being committed in Lebanese territory by the Israeli occupation forces against Lebanese citizens, their villages and houses and to deceive public opinion as to the reality of the inhuman Israeli practices in the south of occupied Lebanon.

The representative of Israel is unjustified in referring to the UNIFIL deployment map in order to assert that Rashaf is situated inside the so-called "security zone". In fact, this map simply indicates the zones where UNIFIL is deployed, and not those where it is stationed. The map showing the zones where UNIFIL is stationed is the military operations map showing specifically the zones, points and forces in question; these are identified by X and Y coordinates, which is not the case on the map referred to by the representative of Israel.

If Rashaf is indeed inside the "security zone", why was the need recently felt to compel the inhabitants to take the road situated in this zone and passing through Beit Yahoun instead of the Rashaf-Hadatha road, situated outside the zone occupied by Israel, which is the main road? As for the assertion by the representative of Israel that access to and from the village in question by its residents continues to be unimpeded, this is belied by the fact that UNIFIL has had to intervene in order to supply the village with foodstuffs, fuel and medical supplies during the period for which the Israeli army and its proxies have besieged it and imposed high-handed measures directed against the inhabitants.

The daily Israeli practices which are being inflicted on Rashaf and the neighbouring villages have led to a mass exodus of their populations as a result of the violent bombardments described in the report on events and the development of the situation in the UNIFIL deployment zone in the south of the country during December 1991, issued by the United Nations Information Centre at Beirut. This report indicates that the Israeli army and the South Lebanon Army have fired more than 70 tank-gun and artillery shells and rockets into the Rashaf zone, as well as thousands of automatic weapon rounds, and that the village's inhabitants have many times called for the intervention of the Lebanese Red Cross and the assistance of UNIFIL to enable them to return to their homes.

As for the assertion by the representative of Israel that the Lebanese army has not confiscated light weaponry held by the inhabitants because it does not control the situation in the zones where it is deployed, it is designed to call in question the Lebanese army's ability to extend the authority of the Lebanese State over the whole of the national territory, particularly to the south of the country, a fallacious pretext which Israel continually uses to justify the maintenance of southern Lebanon under occupation for almost 14 years in defiance of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) and preceding resolutions.

In Lebanon itself and in all international and regional bodies, there is universal awareness that the Lebanese army is totally in control of all the regions in which it is present, deriving strength from the full cooperation of the inhabitants of the regions in which it is deployed. The operations conducted by this army in the Sidon and Tyre regions and the fact that it is deployed in regions which were still recently under UNIFIL confirm its capacity to extend the authority of the State.

The representative of Israel emphasizes that some people have obtained light weaponry in zones where the army is deployed; he is however aware that there is a difference between obtaining weapons and using them, and that this does not mean that the Lebanese army is not in control of the sectors in which it is deployed. Moreover, how can he explain, for his part, the many incidents taking place in the zone occupied by Israel where the Israeli army and the militia which is in its pay have a massive presence?

As to the use by the inhabitants of light weaponry against the occupation forces - or what the representative of Israel describes as terrorist activities - this is taking place within the occupied Lebanese territories. Resistance to occupation is an internationally recognized right and a national duty, and the terrorism taking place in southern Lebanon is that practised by the occupying Power against the civilian population, which has recently compelled hundreds of families to flee their villages and their homes.

As to the presence of Syrian troops in Lebanese territory, to which the representative of Israel refers, he appears to forget that this is a lawful presence in response to a request by the Lebanese Government, and has nothing in common with the Israeli occupation, which is based on force and has been

condemned in the resolutions of the Security Council and of international conferences and bodies.

As for the assertion that Israel has no claims on any part of Lebanese territory, this is belied by the maintenance of the occupation of a good part of southern Lebanon for 14 years which has claimed thousands of victims among the civilian population and laid waste to the region, as well as by the Israeli practices which mean that the occupied zone is now economically and administratively dependent on Israel and isolated from the rest of Lebanon, as is apparent from the Secretary-General's reports. In this respect, the immediate and unconditional implementation of resolution 425 (1978) is the only means by which Israel can prove its good faith.

As for the assertion that Israel believes that the appropriate forum for the resolution of outstanding issues between the two countries lies in the bilateral negotiations which have been taking place within the framework of the peace process, we cannot but assert that Lebanon has always supported the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes, and has always acted in conformity with this position by subscribing to international conventions and resolutions. Lebanon, which is still a victim of aggression and high-handed measures, is only too well aware that a just and lasting peace will be in the interests of all parties to the peace process and will help it liberate its territory. Accordingly, it is extremely anxious to see this process brought to a successful conclusion so that an end can be put to the conflict and the causes of conflict in the region.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 35, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Khalil MAKKAWI
Ambassador
Permanent Representative